

**Commercial Façade And
Aesthetic Improvement Grant Program
Guidelines
December 15, 2004**

1. Objective

To encourage the improvement of the aesthetic quality of commercial properties located in the East Little Creek Road, Riverview Village, and 35th Street corridors through a partnership program developed and initiated by the local business associations and the City of Norfolk.

2. Eligibility and Requirements

- a. Only commercially developed and zoned properties are eligible for the program. All non-conforming land uses are ineligible for grant funding.
- b. Commercial property must exhibit a need for certain façade and aesthetic improvements.
- c. Property must be located in:
 - East Little Creek Road between Chesapeake Boulevard and Shore Drive and on Shore Drive from Little Creek Road to the Shore Drive Bridge.
 - The Riverview Village Corridor along Granby Street between 38th Street and Beach Avenue.
 - Along 35th Street from Granby Street to Colley Avenue.
- d. That façade and aesthetic improvement costs to the commercial property are reasonable.
- e. Ensure that all sources of financing for facade and aesthetic improvement are committed.
- f. Ensure that the façade and aesthetic improvement project is feasible.
- g. That grant funds are to be disbursed on a pro rata basis with other finances provided to the improvement project.
- h. Specific improvements must be set forth with their estimated costs, in an agreement executed with the City of Norfolk prior to the work being initiated to be eligible for payment under this program.

3. Program Incentive

A grant of up to 50% of the cost of the eligible improvements to a maximum of \$15,000 as identified on the list of Aesthetic Architectural Improvements and as identified in the required contractual agreement.

Funding is available on a first come, first served basis to properties in eligible areas. The source of funds is the City Capital Improvement Program set-aside for Neighborhood Commercial Area Programs.

4. Program Promotion

- a. Promotion of program to property owners in conjunction with the business associations in the designated areas..
- b. Eligible properties contacted, program information presented and explained.
- c. Initial consultation and review of improvements and costs undertaken between city staff and applicant.

5. Aesthetic Improvement Grant Review Committee

- a. All applications for an Aesthetic Improvement grant in the designated commercial areas will be reviewed and acted upon by the Improvement Committee from that area who shall have sole discretion to review and approve any grants called for herein. The Improvement Committee will be comprised of three (3) members selected by the business association of that commercial area and one (1) member each from the staffs of the Norfolk Redevelopment and Housing Authority and/or the Department of City Planning & Community Development of the City of Norfolk. The Improvement Committee will review the applications for grant funding for compliance with program guidelines and with accomplishment of the objectives of the Aesthetic Improvement grant program. The Improvement Committee will approve or deny applications for funds and shall have the discretion to modify the grant or said application in a mutually agreeable manner with the applicant to achieve the best interests of the improvement area.
- b. Following approval of an application by the Improvement Committee an Aesthetic Improvement Agreement will be entered into between the City of Norfolk and the applicant setting forth:
 1. Specific improvements to be made as determined by the Improvement Committee.
 2. Estimated amount of rebate.

6. Reimbursement

- a. Applicant completes improvements as specified in the aesthetic improvement contract.
- b. The approved grant (reimbursement) will be paid after completed work is reviewed and approved by the City of Norfolk for consistency with the executed Aesthetic Improvement Grant Agreement.

- c. Improvements shall be completed within 6 months from the date of the agreement. A time extension may be requested if progress is being made during this period. If a time extension has not been granted and work has not commenced on the project within 6 months from the date of the agreement, the agreement becomes null and void.
- d. The approved grant (reimbursement) will be paid after the tenant of the building is fully operational.

7. Eligible Improvements

Below are listed categories of improvements which will improve the aesthetic quality of commercial properties in the designated corridors and will be eligible for funding under the Aesthetic Improvement Program.

- Landscaping
- Fencing
- Exterior lighting
- Building trim /Exterior improvements
- Replacement of legally non-conforming commercial signage
- Enhanced entranceways
- Upgraded parking area surfaces (paving) with some level of associated landscaping improvements.
- Architectural & Engineering Fees Associated with an Exterior / Aesthetic Improvement.
- Site and Building Demolitions related to the upgrading of real estate in the target area.

8. Application Review and Approval Process

- a. Each site will be reviewed and evaluated by the Property owner and the Improvement Committee. Improvements proposed for the property under the program must result in a significant aesthetic improvement from the street view;
- b. All applications must be accompanied by appropriate supporting documentation. Specific proposals describing work to be accomplished and itemized costs must be included. Listed below, as examples, are several improvements that may be eligible:
 - 1) Landscaping - a detailed plan from a licensed landscaper that shows:
 - (a) exactly where each plant is to be located
 - (b) written proposal that includes prices, type, and quantity of plants;
 - 2) Fencing
 - (a) type of fencing; wood, metal, etc., with picture or drawing
 - (b) color, length, height, location (survey - this is required by the City for a permit)
 - (c) cost;

- 3) Exterior Building Improvements (facade improvements, new windows, materials, etc.)
 - (a) type, location and color
 - (b) cost;
 - (c) elevation drawing depicting proposed improvements
 - 4) Enhanced entranceways (awnings, canopies, etc.)
 - (a) drawing or picture or brochure
 - (b) color
 - (c) costs;
 - 5) Upgrade parking area surfaces
 - (a) drawing of area (survey)
 - (b) description of work to be performed
 - (c) type of surface
 - (d) costs;
 - 6) Lighting (Exterior or Security Type)
 - (a) type, location, description (brochure), and price of fixtures; and labor cost
 - 7) Replacement of Commercial Signage
 - (a) a scaled drawing of proposed signs (including information to satisfy zoning review)
 - (b) location and price
- c. All applications submitted for approval will contain a release authorizing the City of Norfolk to place a sign on the property during the course of work.
 - d. For grant applications approved by the Improvement Committee, an Aesthetic Improvement Agreement will be entered into between the applicant and the City of Norfolk including reference to specific improvements and associated costs.
 - e. Payment will be made by the City of Norfolk upon successful completion and final inspection by program staff to ensure consistency with the previously executed agreement. The tenant of the building must also be fully operational before reimbursements will be issued. Requests for payment will be accompanied by "PAID IN FULL" bills or other appropriate receipts. Payments will be lump sum unless specifically arranged otherwise prior to approval.
 - f. Owner accomplished items will be considered; however, owner labor is not an eligible cost (cost of materials only).
 - g. All proposals involving structural changes will include a stamped architectural drawing or pre-approved plan by the City Building Official.